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ABSTRACT

Private self-consciousness (PSC) refers to the dispositional tendency to be attentive to the private, covert aspects of oneself. Studies were conducted to investigate whether there are motivational underpinnings for individual differences in level of PSC. Four separate studies were conducted at three different institutions. Study 1 (N=59) results showed high PSC individuals to be more likely than low PSC individuals to seek out self-relevant information. Study 2 (N=88) demonstrated that high PSC subjects reported being much more likely than low PSC subjects to dwell on negative events in order to better understand them. In Study 3 (N=290), high PSC subjects reported a much higher valuation of self-knowledge than did low PSC subjects. Study 4 (N=104) demonstrated that high and low PSC subjects were equally sensitive to the anticipated valence of the self-informatiion. These findings provide converging evidence of an underlying motivational component, with the specific motives underlying PSC appearing to be the need for self-knowledge and the need for self-defense. A tentative conclusion is that individual differences in private self-consciousness are determined by both psychological motives: high PSC individuals may have a need for self-knowledge that is stronger than their need to protect their self-esteem, while low PSC individuals may have a need for self-defense that outweighs self-knowledge needs. (NB)

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A Motivational Explanation of Private Self-Consciousness*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper investigated whether there are motivational underpinnings for individual differences in level of private self-consciousness. Our findings provide converging evidence that there is an underlying motivational component. In four separate studies, conducted at three different institutions, individuals high in private self-consciousness were more likely either to act or report acting in ways that would lead to greater self-knowledge. This pattern is entirely consistent with the motivational argument we are advancing, but stands in contrast to other viewpoints in the field which largely ignore motivational aspects of self-awareness tendencies. The specific motives underlying this personality trait appear to be need for self-knowledge and need for self-defense. A tentative conclusion is that individual differences in private self-consciousness are determined by both psychological motives: high private self-conscious indivduals may have a need for self-knowledge that is stronger than their need to protect their self-esteem, while low private self-conscious individuals may have a need for self-defense that outweighs self-knowledge needs. Implications of these findings both for other approaches to self-consciousness and for a better etiology of self-consciousness are discussed.

A Motivational Explanation of Private Self-Consciousness

Private self-consciousness refers to the dispositional tendency to engage in a particular kind of psychological state (private self-awareness) in which one is attentive to the private and covert aspects of oneself. Since 1975, when this trait was first identified and measured, over one hundred and eighty studies have been published in this country and abroad in an attempt to better understand the construct (Franzoi, 1986). Despite the considerable variety in these investigations, virtually all of them have seemed to share at least one particular implicit assumption: that individual differences in private self-consciousness do not reflect individual differences in the motivation to engage in self-scrutiny. Even though a handful of studies have found evidence of possible motivational determinants of individual differences in private self-consciousness (e.g., Franzoi & Brewer, 1984; Turner 1978b), to our knowledge no study has specifically set out to investigate whether there are motivational underpinnings for the behaviors characterizing this trait.[1] That is our purpose in this paper.

An important first step in such an undertaking is to define the term "motives" in a way that clearly distinguishes them from personality traits. Our definition of a motive, taken from McClelland (1985), is that it is "a recurrent concern for a goal state based on a natural incentive - a concern that energizes, orients, and selects behavior." (p.590) Defining it as a concern about a goal state implies that the means of reaching the goal (in this case, habitually engaging in or avoiding private self-awareness) is not part of the definition

of motive. The goal state may be defined as attaining a certain outcome, such as better self-understanding, but the particular instrumental acts that lead to such an outcome are not part of the definition. Thus, the personality trait inferred from these instrumental behaviors can be distinguished from underlying psychological motives. It is our belief that the dispositional tendency to engage in or avoid privately self-focused attention (i.e., the trait of private self-consciousness) may result at least in part from underlying motives having to do with the goal state of self-knowledge or self-defense. We believe that a desire for greater self-knowledge may lead to heightened levels of private self-consciousness in an attempt to fulfill that desire; we believe that a desire to protect the self from unpleasant self-relevant information may likewise lead to lower levels of private self-consciousness in an attempt to satisfy that desire.

Our belief in these possibilities is based in part on past research indicating that high private self-conscious individuals (PSCs) appear to differ from low PSCs in several ways relevant to the concepts of self-knowledge and self-defense. For example, those high in private self-consciousness display greater self-knowledge than do low self-conscious individuals (Bernstein & Davis, 1982; Franzoi, 1983; Turner, 1978a), and research indicates that low PSCs are more likely to avoid or be less aware of unpleasant psychological states (Franzoi & Brewer, 1984) and socially undesirable personality characteristics (Turner, 1978b). In addition, Franzoi and Davis (Davis & Franzoi, 1986; Franzoi & Davis, 1985; Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985) have found evidence that high PSC adolescents and adults

are more likely to disclose their private thoughts and feelings to friends and lovers, and have recently argued (Davis & Franzoi, 1987) that indulging in this type of activity may have its roots in motive dispositions.

The critical question in the present study is whether these differences between those high and low in private self-consciousness are due to underlying motives that pull people toward and/or away from self-insight, or whether they are due to psychological processes having no connection to motivational constructs. The motivational perspective assumes that individual differences in private self-awareness tendencies are based at least in part on needs that are being served--needs which cause individuals to develop positive, negative, or neutral attitudes toward activities that are related to self-analysis, introspection, and general self-attention. In contrast, a nonmotivational explanation ignores the potential role that an individual's desires or needs may play in producing self-reflection, and instead, assumes that such self-focus occurs more or less automatically, perhaps triggered by environmental cues.

Nonmotivational Perspectives

One recent and influential example of a nonmotivational approach to understanding self-awareness and self-consciousness is Carver and Scheier's (Carver, 1979; Carver & Scheier, 1981) cybernetic model or control theory explanation of self-attention. This model is mechanistic, with self-awareness described in relation to a discrepancy-reducing feedback loop:

"Self-focus in a standard-salient context represents the test phase of the TOTE (test-operate-test-exit) unit: an assessment of whether a

discrepancy exists. The behavioral response to self-focus ... is the operate phase. The ordering of the control sequence of the feedback loop dictates that operate cannot take place before test reveals a discrepancy." (Carver, 1979: p.1269).

To Carver and Scheier, self-focus simply induces a comparison of one's present state with a salient standard. If there is a discrepancy, the person's behavior will shift to conform to the standard. This shift is a natural consequence of the discrepancy-reducing feedback loop. Thus, in this model there is no discussion of motives or desires, except the statement that desires/motives possessed by a person--represented in the form of behavioral standards--can be activated by self-attention. However, these motives are clearly independent of the self-aware state itself.

Another nonmotivational perspective comes from Hull and Levy's (1979) model of self-awareness, possibly the clearest example of a nonmotivational approach to this topic. This view rests on the assumption of a perceptual state which encodes environmental stimuli in terms of their self-relevance. The model assumes that this perceptual state does not spring from underlying motivations as we have defined them, and, in contrast to Carver and Scheier's model, it also dispenses with the concept of behavioral standards. Instead, the perceptual state appears to be induced by situational factors such as the nature of assigned tasks or the presence of self-symbolic cues. The trait of private self-consciousness is similarly explained in nonmotivational terms:

Dispositionally it may represent either a general propensity on the part of the individual or a by-product of more elaborate cognitive structures corresponding to relationships between self and environment." (p.757).

As with control theory, this model does not discuss the possibility of

underlying motivational constructs influencing self-awareness tendencies.

Finally, Buss (1980) has also offered a theoretical account of self-consciousness which falls into the nonmotivational category. Buss' view is that private self-awareness, whether induced or chronic, produces two kinds of effects. First, it leads to an intensification of the affect (including motives) existing at the time--either positive or negative. Second, it produces clarification--that is, a sharper, clearer, and more distinct knowledge of internal events. In neither case, though, is the state of self-focused attention said to create a motive state, nor is any explicit mention made of a motivational component underlying private self-consciousness differences.

Motivational Perspectives

The only contemporary perspective on self-attention with a clear motivational component is offered by Duval and Wicklund (1972). They argue that discrepancies normally exist between one's present state and the relevant standards of comparison. When a person becomes aware of these discrepancies through self-awareness, s/he experiences an aversive drive state. The first reaction a person has to this aversive state is an attempt to avoid self-awareness (Wicklund, 1975a, 1975b). If avoidance is not possible, the self-aware person may attempt to alter his or her behavior so that it conforms more closely to the standard, and thus, reduce the aversiveness of self-awareness.

From this perspective, self-awareness is conceptualized as producing an aversive state which drives individuals to behave in ways that will reduce or eliminate the negative affect accompanying the state. Thus, self-awareness theory, as proposed by Duval and Wicklund, draws much of its inspiration from earlier drive theories (e.g., Hull, 1943; Spence, 1958) in the motivational field -- in this case, the drive is said to be created by the self-aware state. While this model and the TOTE model share a number of obvious similarities, the critical difference is that the TOTE model dispenses completely with the concept of an aversive drive state. The discrepancy-reducing behaviors posited by the TOTE model are explicitly said to result not from any aversive motivational state, but "as a natural consequence of the engagement of a discrepancy-reducing feedback loop." (Carver & Scheier, 1981; p.145)

While Duval and Wicklund's theory is the only truly motivational view of self-awareness, it differs from our formulation in a crucial way. Duval and Wicklund propose a model in which the state of self-awareness produces an unpleasant motive state. Our view is that existing motive states can lead to a consistent behavioral style corresponding to the trait of private self-consciousness. Thus, the Duval and Wicklund model does not directly attempt to explain individual differences in self-awareness tendencies, but rather, focuses upon situational self-awareness and its effects. We propose that the motivational perspective best suited to explain individual differences in private self-awareness tendencies is an expectancy-value approach (e.g., Atkinson, 1974; Bandura, 1977; Feather, 1982), since it is based on assumptions of purposive striving

toward goal objects. This perspective can be contrasted with drive theory which emphasizes a different approach to human motivation. Whereas drive theory may be thought of as a "push theory" in which behavior is driven by internal energy, expectancy-value theory may be considered a "pull theory," with behavior elicited by perceived goals.

Unlike Duval and Wicklund's theory, our expectancy-value explanation of private self-consciousness makes no blanket assumption about the affect experienced in the self-aware state, but rather assumes that people engage in or avoid self-reflection because of their expectations that such behavior will be either pleasant or unpleasant, and because such reactions rank high or low on the list of things they value. With these assumptions, derived from an expectancy-value theory of motivation, we can account for pleasure-based approach behavior in relation to self-awareness tendencies, as well as for aversion-based avoidance behavior.

Possible Evidence for the Motivational View

What evidence might constitute support for our motivational view? One strategy for generally evaluating the validity of the nonmotivational vs. motivational explanations focuses on a fundamental difference between these two approaches: the hypothesized tendency to seek out or avoid situations where attention will be focused on important private self-aspects. One implication of a motivational explanation is that because of their underlying desires regarding self-knowledge, those high in private self-consciousness will be more likely, relative to low PSCs, to seek out or enter situations where private self-attention is expected. In contrast, the

nonmotivational perspectives do not explain self-consciousness in terms of the fulfillment of any needs or desires, and thus, do not predict that those high in private self-consciousness will necessarily act differently than those low in this disposition when choosing whether or not to enter a setting where private self-awareness is expected.

In Study 1, we tested this notion by exposing people to situations in which they could seek out or avoid self-knowledge about their personality. Because attention to one's own personality characteristics necessitates private self-awareness, a finding that high and low PSCs differed in their approach tendencies to these situations would provide initial evidence for a motivational component underlying self-awareness tendencies.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Materials. Fifty-nine social psychology students (17 males and 42 females) at Marquette University participated in the study. The Private Self-Consciousness subscale of the Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS: Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) was used to measure the personality trait of interest. In addition, the public self-consciousness subscale of the SCS was also administered. These scales comprised the self-report questionnaire.

Procedure. At the beginning of a class session, the instructor told students they would be given the opportunity to participate in an exercise in which they would answer questions about themselves. The instructor emphasized that the questionnaire responses would be kept

confidential, would be scored by a graduate assistant not associated with the course, and that the instructor would not read the responses. He then passed out the questionnaires and stated that if they were willing to participate in the exercise they should print their names at the top of the questionnaires and answer the questions. All but one student participated in the study. Once the students had completed the questionnaires, the instructor asked them to mark on the back of them whether or not they would be interested in meeting individually with the graduate assistant in approximately three weeks to find out what their responses indicated about their personality and how they compared with national standards. Two weeks later the instructor announced in class that the questionnaires had been scored and that the graduate assistant had set aside a series of fifteen minute blocks of time in her office during the next week to meet with interested students about their own questionnaire responses. He then handed out a sign-up sheet on which those students who had earlier indicated an interest in learning about their scores could now indicate the time at which they would meet with the graduate assistant. The following week the graduate assistant met individually with students, described the personality traits of private and public self-consciousness and informed them how their scores on these personality measures compared with national samples. The graduate assistant also noted which students failed to keep their appointments.

Results and Discussion

The dependent variable was the degree of students' interest in learning more about their personality characteristics. This variable was constructed by assigning scores to participants based upon their degree of professed and demonstrated interest in discovering what the questionnaire findings indicated about their personalities. Individuals who did not indicate on the back of the initial questionnaire that they were interested in meeting with the graduate assistant and did not sign up for a later meeting time were assigned a score of "0" (n = 24); those who indicated interest but did not sign up for a meeting time two weeks later were assigned a score of "1" (n = 11); those who indicated interest, signed up for a meeting time but failed to keep their appointment were assigned a score of "2" (n = 14); and finally, those who indicated interest, signed up for a meeting time and kept their appointment were assigned an interest score of "3" (n = 10). It was believed that this weighting procedure identified varying levels of desire to learn about one's own personality.

Pearson correlation coefficients were then calculated between participants' private and public self-consciousness scores and their desire scores. Private self-consciousness was significantly related to interest in learning about one's personality ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), while public self-consciousness was not ($r = -.10$, n.s.). When level of public self-consciousness was controlled, the partial correlation coefficient between participants' level of private self-consciousness and interest was still significant ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Thus, high PSCs exhibited a greater desire to learn about their personalities

than did low PSCs. When level of private self-consciousness was controlled, the partial correlation coefficient between public self-consciousness and interest was again not significant ($r = -.17$, $p = .21$). These findings, then, provide the first tentative support for the hypothesis that private self-consciousness is related to motivational constructs.

It is useful at this point to consider how the nonmotivational perspectives (e.g., Carver, 1979; Hull & Levy, 1979) might account for these results. According to such views, when those high in private self-consciousness act differently from those low in private self-consciousness, it is not due to a difference in underlying motive states, but because the two groups differ in how they react or respond to some <u>other</u> construct. For example, Carver and Scheier's TOTE model argues that the state of private self-awareness (which occurs more frequently among high PSCs) leads to an assessment of whether or not a discrepancy exists between behavior and some standard. The perception of a discrepancy then leads to behavior to reduce it. Thus, high PSCs will act differently than low PSCs solely because of a greater awareness of this behavior-standard discrepancy. The particular standard which guides behavior, however, is completely independent of the self-aware state. To explain the findings in Study 1, then, such a model must posit a relevant standard by which high PSCs are more influenced. To explain why high PSCs were more likely to seek out information about their personalities, one might posit a personal standard--generally held in the subject population--of "seeking greater self-knowledge." This, of course, is one motive which we argue is more likely to exist among those high in private

self-consciousness; the TOTE model would hold simply that this value exists in all individuals, but is more adhered to by high PSCs. While this issue cannot be definitively addressed by the results of Study 1, it is hoped that Studies 2 and 3 will shed some further light on this issue.

If, as Study 1 suggests, private self-consciousness differences can be at least partially explained in terms of underlying motives regarding self-insight, what specific form might these motives take? One way to phrase this question is, "What specific function does private self-awareness serve for the high private self-conscious person, and/or what function is served for the low self-conscious person by not engaging in self-reflection?" Attempting to answer this question was the main purpose of the second phase of our investigation.

Possible Motivational Constructs

Previously, we (Davis & Franzoi, 1987) have suggested that one motive underlying private self-consciousness may be a desire to better understand oneself. That is, high PSCs may have a greater need for self-knowledge. Such a motive would be consistent with a number of demonstrated differences between high and low self-conscious individuals. For example, Turner (1978a) and Franzoi (1983) both found that high PSCs used more adjectives when describing themselves than did low PSCs. Similarly, Nasby (1985), in a study testing recognition memory of trait adjectives previously rated as self-descriptive, found that high PSCs responded in a way that suggested they had more articulated self-concepts than persons low in

self-consciousness.

Research has also shown that the correlation between self-reports and subsequent behavior is substantially greater for high than for low PSC individuals (Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978; Turner, 1978c). Further, Franzoi (1983) found that while the self-evaluations of high PSCs did not differ from those of their close friends, there was a significant discrepancy between evaluations made by the low PSC persons and their friends. The general picture that emerges from these and other studies is that private self-consciousness is associated with a more detailed and accurate knowledge of internal self-aspects, as well as with a self-concept that is more in line with external reality (i.e,., others' perceptions). One way to explain this pattern of results is to assume that high PSC individuals have a greater need for self-knowledge and strive toward this goal state through habitual attention to private self-aspects. One result of this striving is the accumulation of a more detailed and accurate body of self-knowledge.[2]

An alternative way to explain private self-consciousness and the findings of the above studies is in terms of a motive to protect oneself from exposure to painful or unpleasant stimuli, which could be termed a <u>need for self-defense</u>. In describing this motive, it is useful to consider private self-consciousness from the point of view of the low PSC person -- and consider the possibility that it is the <u>reluctance</u> of the low PSC person to self-reflect, rather than the heightened desire by high PSCs to do so that accounts for private self-consciousness differences. This motivational explanation therefore, hypothesizes that low PSC individuals are concerned with

defending their current level of self-esteem by avoiding activities that might result in questioning their self-conceptions. As we (Davis & Franzoi, 1987) have explained this perspective, low PSCs may not attend to their private self-aspects for the same reason that they may not discuss personal, intimate matters with friends and lovers (Davis & Franzoi, 1986; Franzoi & Davis, 1985; Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985): because of a dispositional reluctance to explore and reveal hidden, and perhaps unpleasant, personal qualities. This hypothesis views low PSCs as partially motivated by a need to maintain the most positive self-esteem possible and, as such, it forms a natural contrast with the previous motivational explanation which conceives of high PSC individuals being primarily motivated by a need for self-knowledge.

It is important to note that these two hypotheses are not simply opposites of one another, and therefore redundant; instead, each view leads to unique predictions. In particular, these two hypotheses make different predictions when the anticipated valence of self-relevant information is considered. The self-knowledge hypothesis proposes that high PSC individuals have a desire for self-knowledge which will lead them to seek out self-relevant information regardless of its anticipated valence; low PSCs should be relatively less likely to seek out such information, again regardless of its anticipated valence. The self-defense hypothesis, in contrast, would predict that low PSCs, because of a desire to avoid negative self-information, will be particularly sensitive to the possibility of learning unpleasant truths. As a result, they will be especially likely to avoid negatively valenced information. Thus, the self-defense hypothesis

proposes that low PSC individuals will be more sensitive than high PSCs to the valence of self-relevant information.

Some of the available evidence on behavioral differences associated with private self-consciousness is quite consistent with the self-defense hypothesis. Turner (1978b), for example, in a study of the speed of processing self-relevant information, found that high PSCs made faster judgments concerning the self-relevance of socially undesirable trait adjectives than did low PSCs, but did not differ from them in response time to socially desirable trait adjectives. These findings led Turner to conclude that positive or socially desirable components of the self-concept are readily available for both high and low PSC individuals, but only individuals high in private self-consciousness have ready access to their negative or socially undesirable characteristics. This study would appear to be quite consistent with the self-defense hypothesis; the low PSCs were selective in their self-knowledge, only differing from their high self-conscious counterparts in knowledge of negative self-aspects.

A second study that appears to be parsimoniously explained by the self-defense hypothesis investigated the nature and quality of the private self-aware state in high and low PSC individuals. Employing experiential sampling methodology, which enabled them to randomly sample subjects' thoughts and feelings as they went about their normal daily activities, Franzoi and Brewer (1984) found evidence suggesting that high and low PSC individuals react differently to the private self-aware state. Not only did low PSCs spend less time attending to private self-aspects, but when they were privately self-aware, their degree of private self-awareness was positively related to their

evaluation of affect experienced in this state of awareness; if the affect was unpleasant, degree of private self-awareness tended to be relatively low, but if the affect was pleasant, degree of private self-awareness tended to be higher. This effect, which Franzoi and Brewer termed "selective self-attention," did not occur among the high PSCs; for them, degree of private self-awareness was unrelated to whether their private thoughts and feelings were positive or negative. Consistent with the self-defense hypothesis, then, these findings suggest that individuals low in private self-consciousness may be less willing to engage in private self-awareness when their dominant affect in that state is negative, or they expect it to be.

Testing the Motivational Hypotheses

How might these two different hypotheses be tested? One strategy for evaluating them is quite straightforward: simply ask people about their motives. If the self-knowledge need hypothesis is correct, then high PSCs should report that they generally strive for greater self-understanding, even if it is unpleasant. If the self-defense hypothesis is correct, low PSCs should report avoiding self-analysis, especially when its affect is negative. A finding of significant differences between those high and low in private self-consciousness using this technique could provide support for the specific motivational hypotheses.

In addition, the results from such a study could help overcome some of the limitations of Study 1. In Study 1, for example, the decision to make and keep appointments with the graduate assistant was only an indirect measure of the desire for self-knowledge which we

argue may underlie private self-consciousness differences. Explicitly asking about such motives will allow a more direct assessment of this crucial variable. Further, such a direct assessment of motive will help in evaluating an alternative explanation for the Study 1 results. Those results can be explained either by an assumption that high PSCs have a greater need for self-knowledge (motivational view) or by an assumption that such a motive is universal and that high PSCs simply adhere to it more strongly (nonmotivational view). Directly asking those high and low in private self-consciousness about their values will allow an evaluation as to which assumption is more tenable. This approach was taken in the next two studies.

Study 2

Method

Participants and Materials. Eighty-eight undergraduate students (34 males and 54 females) at Marquette University participated in the study. The private and public self-consciousness subscales of the SCS were included on the self-report questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire asked participants to choose which of the following statements was a better description of themselves: "When something bad or unpleasant happens to you, do you...? (A) Try to put your mind on more pleasant things, or (B) Think it over and try to understand it." This question was followed by the request: "Examine your choice above. Why do you think and behave in this manner? Explain yourself in a paragraph."

Procedure. At the beginning of class, the instructor told students they would be given the opportunity to participate in an exercise in which they would answer questions about themselves. The instructor emphasized that the questionnaire responses would be anonymous. Two different forms were administered, with half the students completing the SCS subscales first and the other half of the class completing the forced-choice and explanation questions first. Those individuals scoring in the top and bottom thirds of the distribution on the private self-consciousness subscale were included in the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The dependent variables were the participants' responses to the questions about what they do when something unpleasant happens to them: both the choice they made and their explanation of that choice. Regarding participants' choices, the percentage of individuals making each choice appears in Table 1. No order effects were present in the data.

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Insert table 1 about here

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Chi square analysis with Yates' correction for continuity indicated significant differences between the cells (X^2 = 6.46, df=1, $p < .02$). Upon further examination of the choices made by each PSC group, we found that high PSCs stated that they were more likely to think over unpleasant events and try to understand them rather than thinking about more pleasant things (X^2 = 17.64, df=1, $p < .001$). On the other hand, no significant differences were found between the stated

choices of low PSCs (X^2 = .52, n.s.). Consistent with the self-knowledge need hypothesis, these findings suggest that high PSCs may indeed have a desire for self-understanding, regardless of its affective nature. The results, however, offer no clear support for the self-defense hypothesis, since low PSCs did not report that they were more likely to avoid self-reflection when something unpleasant happened to them. The results also tend to undercut the argument that a desire for accurate self-knowledge is equally present throughout the population; instead it appears that this desire is more prevalent among high PSC individuals.

A second set of analyses was also conducted on the responses to the open-ended questions regarding the reasons for each participant's choice. Examining the number of words used by participants to explain their choices revealed that high PSCs' explanations were significantly longer (by 37%) than the low PSCs' (M = 72.9, sd = 26.0 vs. M = 53.2, sd = 28.1, respectively; $t(59) = 2.85$, $p < .01$). This finding is consistent with past research (Franzoi, 1983; Turner, 1978a) which has found that low PSCs use fewer adjectives and traits when describing themselves than do high PSCs. It is also consistent with research indicating that low PSCs do not have as accurate an understanding of themselves as do those who habitually self-reflect (e.g., Bernstein & Davis, 1982; Franzoi, 1983; Turner, 1978a; Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978). The fact that the low PSCs' explanations of their actions were considerably shorter than those of the high PSCs suggests that they may not have had as clear an understanding of why they engage in or avoid private self-awareness than did the high self-conscious individuals. An analysis of the content of the participants' reasons

for their actions strengthens this belief. Over 22% of the low PSCs did not offer an explanation of their actions but simply reiterated their avoidance tendencies, while only 3% of the high self-conscious individuals failed to shed some light on their behavior.

These findings provide evidence that high and low PSCs differ in their characteristic cognitive reactions to unpleasant events, and can be interpreted as support for the idea that a desire for self-knowledge is more likely to exist among high PSC individuals. If true, then this provides evidence inconsistent with the alternative explanation for the Study 1 results, which traditional views of private self-consciousness would advance.

Study 3

In an attempt to provide further support for the idea that a desire for self-knowledge is stronger in high vs low PSC individuals, another study was conducted. Rather than again asking participants about one hypothetical "unpleasant event," a more general index of desire for self-knowledge was constructed, so that its relation to private self-consciousness could be assessed. If our arguments are correct, than high PSCs should score significantly higher on an instrument designed to assess one's overall desire for self-knowledge.

Method

Participants and Materials. Data from two samples were collected and analyzed separately. At Eckerd College, 84 undergraduate students (37 males and 47 females) participated in the study, while at Marquette University, 206 undergraduates (95 males and 111 females)

participated. Materials used were the Private and Public Self-Consciousness subscales and a scale designed to measure need for self-knowledge. This Self-Knowledge Need Scale consists of the following five items: It's important for me to understand as much as possible about myself; One of my goals in life is to understand myself better; I think it's important for me to know what I'm really like; It's not that important for me to understand myself a lot (reverse scored); Having an accurate view of myself is very desirable. A standard 5-point Likert scaling procedure was used with responses ranging from "1" (extremely uncharacteristic) to "5" (extremely characteristic). Employing principal components analysis, we tested the factor structure of the scale based on the responses of an independent sample of 193 Marquette University undergraduates not included in Study 3, and found a single-factor solution (eigenvalue criterion 1.00), with all items loading above .61 on this factor. The scale also had adequate internal reliability for that sample (Coefficient alpha = .76). Based on these analyses and on the face validity of the scale items, it appears that the Self-Knowledge Need Scale is measuring a single construct dealing with need for self-knowledge. Thus responses to these five items were summed for each participant to produce a single measure of self-knowledge need.

Procedure. For the Marquette sample, the two SCS subscales and the Self-Knowledge Need Scale were administered during the same testing session, as part of a larger questionnaire including other self-report items. For the Eckerd sample, two testing sessions were utilized. The two SCS subscales were administered during the first session, and the Self-Knowledge Need Scale was given two weeks later

during the second session.

Results and Discussion

Prior to conducting the main analyses, internal reliability measures were calculated for each sample's responses to the Self-Knowledge Need Scale. As in the previous sample, the internal reliability was found to be adequate (Marquette coefficient alpha = .82 & Eckerd coefficient alpha = .81).

Two types of analyses were conducted: (1) using a tertiary split, individuals scoring in the top and bottom third of the private self-consciousness distribution were compared on their Self-Knowledge Need scores, and (2) using the full sample, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between private and public self-consciousness and need for self-knowledge.

As predicted, high PSCs were much more likely to hold attitudes reflecting a desire for self-knowledge (Eckerd sample: High PSC Mean = 21.70, SD = 1.92 vs Low PSC Mean = 16.19, SD = 3.16, $t_{83} = -7.89$, $p < .001$, $r = .73$, $p < .001$; Marquette sample: High PSC Mean = 22.55, SD = 1.86 vs Low PSC Mean = 17.68, SD = 3.86, $t_{140} = -9.50$, $p < .001$, $r = .67$, $p < .001$). In contrast, public self-consciousness was not significantly related to the self-knowledge need measure in the Eckerd sample ($r = .08$, ns) and only a small relation was found in the Marquette sample ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). This small correlation, however, was explained by the moderate correlation typically found between the two self-consciousness measures. When a partial correlation coefficient was calculated between public self-consciousness and need for self-knowledge, controlling for private self-consciousness, no

significant relation was found ($r = .07$, ns). Controlling for public self-consciousness did not appreciably reduce the correlation between private self-consciousness and need for self-knowledge ($r = .66$, $p < .001$).[3]

Taken together, the first three studies provide clear evidence for the idea--fundamental to our argument--that those high and low on private self-consciousness differ in their values regarding self-knowledge. Specifically, the evidence supports our argument that high PSCs have a greater desire for self-knowledge (Studies 2 and 3), and will take action (Study 1) to attain that goal. Thus, the motivational view in general and the self-knowledge hypothesis in particular have received considerable support from these results.

However, while providing important evidence regarding the possible motivational underpinning for private self-consciousness, Studies 2 and 3 were not without weaknesses. In particular, they suffer from an inability to provide an adequate test of the self-defense hypothesis. The key element in such a test, as outlined earlier, is a manipulation of the anticipated valence of self-relevant information. Neither Study 2 nor Study 3 included such a manipulation. Study 3, of course, does not address the issue of valence at all, and while Study 2 inquired about typical behavioral reactions to negative events, it did not ask a parallel question about positive events. Since the critical prediction of the self-defense hypothesis is that those low in private self-consciousness will be differentially responsive to the valence of self-information, the absence of a positive valence condition makes it impossible to fully evaluate this hypothesis. The fact that high PSC participants

reported a greater likelihood of ruminating over negative events (Study 2) could be explained by either the self-knowledge hypothesis (due to their greater need to know) or the self-defense hypothesis (due to their lesser need to defend the self). It is only with the inclusion of both positive and negative self-information that the prediction derived from the self-defense hypothesis can be adequately tested. To overcome this shortcoming, Study 4 was conducted.

Study 4

In Study 4 we took an experimental approach to evaluating the two motivational hypotheses. High and low PSC participants were placed in a situation in which they had a choice of interacting or not with a person possessing information about them. Some individuals were led to believe that the self-information to be conveyed by the other person was probably positive; some believed that it was probably negative; some had no expectation regarding the favorability of the information. If the dominant motive underlying private self-consciousness is need for self-knowledge and not need for self-defense, then high PSCs should be more likely to choose to interact with the knowledgable other than would low PSCs, regardless of positive or negative expectancies. If the dominant motive was one of self-defense, however, then a different pattern would be expected. Both high and low PSCs would choose to interact with the other as long as the information was likely to be positive; if unpleasant information was expected, those low in private self-consciousness would be especially unwilling to interact with the other and run the risk of threatening self-esteem. When no expectancies have been aroused, the self-defense hypothesis would predict no behavioral

differences between high and low PSCs, since no self-esteem threat should be present.

Method

Participants and Materials. One hundred and four undergraduate students at Eastern Illinois University participated in the study. Materials used were the Private Self-Consciousness subscale of the SCS (Fenigstein, et. al., 1975) and a bogus form of the Remote Associates Test (RAT). The RAT is a test designed to measure creativity, and each item consists of a series of three stimulus words followed by a blank space. The respondent is to complete the blank by filling in a word which is related to all three stimulus words. (Example: For the stimuli cookies, sixteen, and heart, the answer is "sweet.") We constructed a bogus multiple choice form of the RAT in which respondents were given a choice of three possible answers with which to fill in the blank. On nine of the eighteen items, the correct answer was included among the response choices; on the other nine items, no correct answer was included, making the item insoluble. (Example of an insoluble item: blood, music, and cheese followed by the choices "sharp," "red," and "age.") Thus, the resulting task was ambiguous enough so that participants were unsure as to how well they performed.

Procedure. The Private Self-Consciousness subscale was administered to over three hundred students from five introductory psychology classes. From among those individuals scoring in the top and bottom third of the distribution, 104 were recruited to participate in the experiment. Participants were run individually,

and upon entering the testing area, were greeted by the experimenter and given preliminary information regarding the experiment. They were told by the experimenter that the RAT would measure one aspect of their overall creativity. The experimenter also stressed at this point how important creativity is, both for the individual and for our society. The experimenter was blind to the PSC level of the participant throughout the entire experiment.

After the participant completed the bogus RAT, recording his/her answers on an optical scan sheet, the experimenter reentered the experimental cubicle and in the course of her remarks introduced information which suggested to the participants something concerning their likely level of performance. In the Low Expectancy condition, participants were told: "Most students at Eastern have not done too well on this test. The average score at Eastern is 20% correct, well below the national average." In the High Expectancy condition, they were told: "Most students at Eastern have done quite well on this test. The average score here is 80% correct, well above the national average." In the No Expectancy condition, the participants were told nothing concerning average scores on the RAT.

The experimenter then left the room, ostensibly to score the test, and gave the participants a final questionnaire which included a manipulation check on the expectancy manipulation. After a delay of two to three minutes, the experimenter returned to the room and told the participant that the optical scanner was not working and could not score the test. The participants were then given a choice: they could wait 10-15 minutes while the experimenter found the answer key and hand-scored the test, or since the experiment was over, they could

leave. This decision was the primary dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

The manipulation check item asked participants to estimate how well they had done on the RAT in terms of percent correct. To assess the effectiveness of this manipulation, a 2 (Low vs. High Expectancy) X 2 (Low vs. High PSC) analysis of variance was carried out on responses to the manipulation check item. As expected, the main effect for expectancy was significant ($F_{1,67} = 60.54$; $p < .001$), with Low Expectancy participants reporting lower estimates of success on the RAT (M = 38.4%) than High Expectancy participants (M = 68.9%). In addition, a main effect for PSC level also emerged ($F_{1,67} = 4.10$; $p < .05$), with high PSCs reporting slightly higher estimates of success (M = 56.7%) than did low PSCs (M = 50.1%). The interaction of expectancy and PSC was not significant ($F < 1.00$).

Comparisons were next carried out between the responses of the No Expectancy participants and the other two conditions. For both low and high PSCs, participants in the No Expectancy condition had quite high expectations regarding their success on the RAT. In neither PSC group did the expectations of the No Expectancy participants differ from those of the High Expectancy group (both F's < 1.00) and in both cases they were significantly greater than those of the Low Expectancy group (both F's > 18.00; p's < .001).

Regarding the decision to stay or leave, the percentage of individuals choosing to stay in each condition appears in table 2.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The overall chi square analysis indicated significant differences between the cells (X^2 = 10.40, df = 2; $p < .01$). Upon further examination of the high and low PSC individuals in each condition, a theoretically important pattern was discovered. In the "no information" condition (X^2 = 2.67, df=1; $p > .10$) and "High Expectancy" condition (X^2 = .07, df=1; ns) no significant differences in behavior were found due to level of private self-consciousness. However, when participants had low expectations regarding their level of creativity, low PSCs were significantly less likely than were high PSCs to stay (X^2 = 7.62, df=1; $p < .01$).

In order to specifically examine our prediction that low PSCs would be more sensitive to the valence manipulation than high PSCs, two additional comparisons were made. For the low PSCs only, the responses in the low and high expectancy conditions were compared. The low PSC participants were sensitive to the expectancy manipulation (X^2 = 6.30, df = 1, $p < .02$), exhibiting a greater willingness to expose themselves to self-relevant information when the anticipated valence was positive. An identical analysis of the high PSC participants revealed that they were not sensitive to the expectancy manipulation, exhibiting an equal willingness to expose themselves to self-relevant information regardless of its anticipated valence (X^2 = .93, df = 1, ns).

How can these results be interpreted? First, as in Study 1, these findings provide support for the general hypothesis that there is an underlying motivational explanation for individual differences in private self-consciousness. Under certain circumstances, when given the opportunity to learn more about themselves, high and low PSCs differed in their behavioral responses, something not predicted from a nonmotivational point of view. Thus, the present investigation provides further evidence that motivational factors play a part in determining the personality trait of private self-consciousness.

More specifically, these results offer the strongest support yet for the self-defense hypothesis as an explanation for the differences between high and low private self-conscious individuals. This support stems from the fact that when the anticipated valence of the self-relevant information was varied, the low PSC individuals were more affected by it than were the high PSC individuals. When high and low PSCs expected to learn something positive about themselves, the low PSCs' interest and desire for self-knowledge was as strong as the high PSCs'. However, low PSCs' willingness to learn self-relevant information was considerably lower than high PSCs' when they expected to learn something negative about themselves. This pattern of results is consistent with, and only predicted by, the self-defense hypothesis.

General Discussion and Conclusions

The results of these investigations provide converging evidence that there is an underlying motivational component contributing to private self-consciousness differences. These conclusions stand in

contrast to other viewpoints in the field (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Hull & Levy, 1979) which largely ignore motivational aspects of self-awareness tendencies. In addition, the studies presented here indicate that two specific motives, need for self-knowledge and need for self-defense, may be important dispositions underlying private self-consciousness.

In four separate studies, conducted at three different institutions, individuals high in private self-consciousness were more likely either to act or report acting in ways that would lead to greater self-knowledge. This pattern is entirely consistent with the motivational argument which we are advancing; however, these findings -- especially those in Study 4 -- are difficult to account for with traditional nonmotivational approaches. The nonmotivational approaches can possibly account for the Study 1 findings--that high PSC individuals are more likely to seek out self-relevant information--by assuming that high PSC individuals are simply more likely to act in accordance with a generally held standard emphasizing the desirability of self-knowledge. This assumption is contradicted by Studies 2 and 3. Study 2 demonstrates that those high in PSC report being much more likely than low PSC individuals to dwell on negative events in order to better understand them. This would seem to reveal a greater concern for obtaining self-knowledge among those high in PSC. This interpretation is further bolstered by Study 3, which directly asks about the value attached to self-knowledge; high PSCs report a much higher valuation of such knowledge. Thus, evidence suggests that high and low PSCs differ in the possession of a standard regarding self-knowledge rather than simply in their adherence to it.

Finally, the nonmotivational explanations have even greater difficulty in explaining Study 4, which demonstrates that high and low PSCs are not equally sensitive to the anticipated valence of the self-information.

The Study 4 results are especially problematic for the nonmotivational approaches because all such approaches typically make the prediction that those high in PSC are most likely to show a greater sensitivity or reaction to valenced information. For example, Buss (1980) explicitly argues that greater private self-consiousness leads to an intensification of whatever affect is being experienced at the time. Similar predictions of more polarized responses to self-relevant information can be derived from the positions of Carver and Scheier (1981) and Hull and Levy (1979). Numerous investigations have demonstrated a greater responsivity to information among those high in private self-consciousness and/or among those in whom private self-awareness has been induced (e.g., Carver, 1977; Scheier, 1976; Scheier & Carver, 1977; Scheier, Carver, & Gibbons, 1981). It would be expected, then, from the standpoint of traditional views of self-consciousness, that the high PSC individuals in Study 4 would show a greater sensitivity to the valence manipulation--greater pleasure at the prospect of favorable information or greater distress at the prospect of unfavorable information--and have acted on these feelings accordingly. It was instead the low PSC individuals who showed this pattern. While presenting an interpretational problem for the nonmotivational theories, this finding of greater sensitivity to valence among low PSCs accords perfectly with the self-defense hypothesis, which views only those low in private self-consciousness

as especially likely to avoid acquiring potentially negative self-information.

Taken as a whole, then, these studies provide support for both the self-knowledge and self-defense motives. The inability of the present investigation to provide clear evidence for the predominance of one of these motives over the other may be due to the fact that in many people they co-exist, and behaviors performed in furtherance of one motive goal may influence the attainment of the others. Thus, in seeking self-knowledge one may become aware of certain "truths" that threaten self-esteem. Similarly, in defending self-esteem one may avoid and deny certain "truths" that would provide greater self-knowledge. A tentative conclusion then, is that, to some degree at least, individual differences in private self-awareness tendencies are determined by both psychological motives. High PSCs may have a need for self-knowledge that is stronger than need to protect their self-esteem, while low PSCs may have a need for self-defense that outweighs self-knowledge needs.

Developmental Issues

If motivational concerns can indeed lead to the development of a behavioral style characterized by greater or less self-attention, how might this occur? This is a difficult issue to address, but some ideas suggest themselves. In his account of possible developmental antecedents of private self-consciousness, Buss (1980) has suggested that such childhood events as chronic ill health or social isolation may produce the conditions which would prompt or allow a child to begin paying more attention to his or her internal world than to the

external one. If such tendencies are not overridden by other factors, they may set the stage for the development of a strong introspective tendency in adulthood. We find this speculation plausible, but would also add some other possible factors more relevant to our motivational argument.

It seems likely that a desire for greater self-knowledge may be bolstered in childhood by adult models and nurtured by parental reinforcement. Adults who verbalize inner thoughts and feelings, who openly analyze their own behavior, and who react favorably to such behavior in their children may produce an environment in which children come to seek and value such self-insight. This valuation of self-knowledge by parents may then lead to a development in the child of the self-aware behavioral style characteristic of those high in private self-consciousness.

It seems likely, however, that something more than modeling and parental reinforcement is necessary to fully explain the development of a strong self-defense motive. It may be that early self-scrutiny, coupled with highly unpleasant affect, may produce in some a learned avoidance of self-attention, which would correspond to the self-defense motive we have advanced. Alternatively, it may be that persons for whom self-concept is problematic may feel especially threatened by the possibility of acquiring negative self-information, and may develop a characteristic avoidance of potentially unpleasant information early in life. Children with extremely negative self-esteem may therefore be most at risk for developing this defensive cognitive style.

Implications for Other Approaches to Self-Consciousness

It may be useful to conclude this discussion by clarifying the implications that this research has for other approaches to self-consciousness. Clearly we believe that the motivational underpinnings of private self-consciousness can have implications for behavior; all four investigations indicated that this is true. However, in many cases, we believe that the motivational concerns which lead to the development of private self-consciousness differences among individuals will be irrelevant to the later consequences of those differences.

More specifically, consider the nonmotivational explanations of self-consciousness effects offered by Carver and Scheier (1981) or Hull and Levy (1979). In many situations, our position would say nothing which contradicts their arguments about the way in which individual differences in private self-consciousness can affect behavior. Whether through a cybernetic TOTE model or through different encoding processes, existing differences in private self-consciousness may indeed have some of the influences on thought and behavior proposed by those approaches. However, in a particular set of situations--those involving the opportunity for learning information relevant to the self--we feel that the motivational components of private self-consciousness can become apparent, and that our motivational arguments therefore provide a new and useful insight. Furthermore, situations where such motives are likely to influence behavior are not infrequent. In the course of everyday life people typically have numerous opportunities to seek out or avoid information which is relevant to the self. It seems likely, however, that the

importance of the self-relevant information will moderate the impact of such motivational concerns on behavior. The less important that some self-relevant information is perceived to be, the less useful our motivational perspective is likely to be in explaining people's subsequent actions. In such situations,or in situations where the opportunity to acquire self-relevant information is completely lacking, the substantive contribution of our approach lies simply in helping to understand how private self-consciousness differences come to exist in the first place.

Another point of distinction between our approach and other theoretical approaches has to do with a consideration of the differences between the state of self-awareness and the trait of self-consciousness. While other approaches typically draw a formal definitional distinction between them, these other approaches do not typically emphasize and differences in the psychological consequences of the state and the trait. Our position is that it is a mistake to equate the two: while they may share many psychological properties, an adequate theory explaining individual differences in private self-consciousness and the behavioral consequences of this trait must pay close attention to the self-concept (or self history) and psychological motives of the individual. In other words, such a theory must be grounded in a personality tradition that is more than just an explanation of how situational factors influence current behavior. In this regard, our present arguments address the way in which the trait of private self-consciousness may be developed and how it then may influence behavior, while having less to say about the moment-by-moment behavioral implications of the state of private

self-awareness. That is, other than our belief (shared by many) that the self-aware state can produce negative affect, and thus produce in some individuals a disposition to avoid private self-awareness unless prompted, our argument says little new about the precise way in which the state of self-attention shapes behavior. Again, the accumulated evidence of other theorists and researchers speaks more forcefully and persuasively to these issues. The importance of our work, we feel, is in the promise it holds for better understanding the etiology of self-consciousness and more fully explaining why high and low PSC individuals behave differently when issues related to acquiring self-knowledge are salient.

Footnotes

1. Plant and Ryan (1985) studied the relationship between self-consciousness and intrinsic motivation. However, their aim was to search for clues as to how private and public self-consciousness can lead to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and not to the underlying motivational determinants of self-consciousness itself.

2. This pattern can of course be accounted for by nonmotivational explanations as well.

3. When similar analyses were conducted for the Eckerd sample, the correlation between public self-consciousness and need for self-knowledge, controlling for private self-consciousness, was was again not significant ($r = .01$). As in the Marquette sample, controlling for public self-consciousness did not reduce the correlation between private self-consciousness and need for self-knowledge ($r = .73$).

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Table 1

What Do You Do When Something Unpleasant Happens To You?

	Put Your Mind On More Pleasant Things	Think It Over And Try To Understand It
Low Private Self-Consciousness	42% (13/31)	58% (18/31)
High Private Self-Consciousness	a 10% (3/30)	a 90% (27/30)

Note. Values sharing the same superscripts differ significantly at the .001 level.

Table 2

Percentage of Subjects Choosing to Expose Themselves to Self-Relevant Information as a Function of Private Self-Consciousness and Valence of Information

	No Expectancy	Low Expectancy	High Expectancy
Low Private Self-Consciousness	a 63% (10/16)	a 40% (8/20)	a 84% (16/19)
High Private Self-Consciousness	b 93% (14/15)	a 89% (16/18)	b 75% (12/16)

Note. Values in the same column sharing the same superscript differ significantly at the .01 level.